



# What Caregivers Should Know

**Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons**

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Caring for a person who is hard of hearing can be a daunting experience because communicating becomes such a challenge.

Just because someone wears a hearing aid does not mean that he or she hears normally. Often, the person *can hear but cannot understand* what's being said.



Here are some helpful hints to ease frustration for both the caregiver and the person with hearing loss:

## When you are speaking:

- Be sure you have the listener's attention
- Face the person, do not speak with your back turned or from another room
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Do not chewing gum or food while you are speaking
- Keep objects, such as fingers and pencils, away from your mouth and face
- If you have a mustache, keep it trimmed above your upper lip
- Be patient and smile
- Be aware that saying "never mind," "forget it," or "I'll tell you later" is hurtful
- Keep a pad and pen nearby for writing messages back and forth
- Offer clues to accompany your words, such as gesturing, pointing or miming
- Use picture cards to point to what you mean when other strategies fail

## Assess the hard of hearing listener:

- How is the person feeling today? Well? In pain? Fatigued? Anxious?
- Has he or she started on different medication that could affect hearing, energy level, or ability to focus?
- Does the person have vision problems that could affect the ability to lipread?
- Can the person insert hearing aid batteries without help?
- Are the batteries in the hearing aid and are they charged?

### How is the listening environment?

- Be sure there is no background noise, such as TV, radio, or noise from another room
- Ensure that the overall lighting is good
- Be sure the light source is not behind the person speaking
- Keep the room at a comfortable temperature
- Remove objects such as flower arrangements, candles, or centerpieces blocking the person's view of the speaker
- Stay within a 3-to-6 foot proximity of the speaker
- Use a PA system or listening system when needed

### Think about what you're saying:

- Does the listener understand the topic, know what's being discussed?
- Is the vocabulary familiar?
- Is the listener apprised when the subject is changed?
- Can you use key words or rephrase the message?

### In general:

- Keep extra hearing aid batteries in a re-closeable, plastic bag along with instructions on how to replace the batteries and a copy of the business card of the person's audiologist
- Keep a set of instructions in another re-closeable, plastic bag on how to assist the person with putting in their hearing aids, cochlear implant or other devices
- Be sure that other caregivers, family members or supervisors know where the person keeps his or her hearing aids when they are not being worn

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